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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 12, 2023

Dennis McDonough
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Secretary McDonough:

I am writing to you concerned about veterans, including some of my constituents, who are not receiving reimbursement for non-emergency medical transportation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). I have the honor of representing Missouri's 4th Congressional District, which has a significant military presence including Fort Leonard Wood and Whiteman Air Force Base. In addition to these prestigious military installations, my district has a substantial veteran population that depends on the VA to receive medical transportation.

Several of my constituents have contacted my office to voice their displeasure and concern about not being reimbursed by the VA for non-emergency medical transportation. On February 4, 2022, the VA announced the Truman VA in Columbia, Missouri would discontinue the use of travel pay kiosks. Those eligible for reimbursement are now supposed to use the online portal, the Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System (BTSSS). According to the press release, *"Through the use of their own smart phone, laptop or home computer, this system allows eligible Veterans, caregivers, and beneficiaries the ability to submit claims 24/7, 365 days a year from anywhere and at anytime."*¹ This poses a challenge to my constituents as our seniors and those in rural areas may not be able to access the BTSSS due to difficulty navigating the internet or lack of high-speed internet. They found it much easier and more efficient using the kiosks, and many are uncomfortable with the new system.

Before the travel pay kiosks were removed, reimbursements were dispersed quickly, within two or three weeks. What I have been told suggests there is a serious backlog that is directly affecting our veterans' ability to receive reimbursements. Our veterans proudly served our country and put

¹ "Truman VA Discontinues Use of Travel Pay Kiosks, Completes Reimbursement Modernization," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, February 4, 2022, <https://www.va.gov/columbia-missouri-health-care/news-releases/truman-va-discontinues-use-of-travel-pay-kiosks-completes-reimbursement-modernization/>

their lives on the line. It is unacceptable not to provide timely reimbursement to them. We must do right by our veterans and fix this issue immediately.

I am hopeful you will be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is the average processing time for a non-emergency transportation claim under the new BTSSS system?
2. How many claims are in the queue and are yet to be processed?
3. Have resources been reallocated from maintaining personnel that handle reimbursements to another area within the VA?
4. Would you consider returning to the kiosks due to the adverse outcomes we are seeing with BTSSS?

Ensuring our veterans who selflessly served our country and risked everything are properly cared for is important to me and the people of Missouri's 4th Congressional District. Please provide a response to the following questions no later than April 28, 2023.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Alford", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mark Alford
Member of Congress